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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken in 1966 to determine the extent of K-12 economic education in the public schools of California and the college training of the economic teachers. The objective was to develop constructive recommendations in areas where the programs need strengthening. All elementary and secondary school districts were surveyed. Forty percent of the elementary schools offered students units of economics. Only 41 percent of the schools provided some inservice training in economics for elementary teachers. Forty-seven percent of the elementary teachers had no college training in economics, and 56% had less than three semester units of college economics. Less than one-third of the high schools reported they offered a grade 12 economics course. Over 91% of the high school seniors in the state do not take a senior level economics course. Separate economics courses below grade 12 level were offered by only 16 percent of the schools. High school economics teachers have had little or no training in economics. Conclusions indicated that California schools need to expand economics courses and offer many institutes in economics for teachers. An outline of the kind of teacher training recommended is provided. (Author/RM)

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ECONOMIC EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

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CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Division of Instruction
Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education
February, 1967
Sacramento, California

Max Rafferty
Superintendent of Public Instruction
California State Department of Education

PREFACE

This study was undertaken for the purposes of determining the extent of economic education in the public schools of California and the college training of the teachers in economics. The objective is to develop constructive recommendations in areas where the programs need strengthening.

DONALD E. KITCH
Acting Chief
Division of Instruction

GLEN D. SMITH
Acting Chief, Bureau of Elementary
and Secondary Education

The Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education conducted a survey of all elementary and secondary school districts in California in order to ascertain the status of economic education in this State. In the case of those with elementary organization the districts supplied the necessary information. Secondary schools supplied the information either on the district basis or on the basis of individual schools as they chose. Approximately 80 percent of the school districts replied representing about 70 percent of the students in California.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Of the elementary schools that replied 40.07 percent of their students were offered units of economics. The percentage of schools offering such instruction by grades varied from a low of approximately 28 percent for grade seven to a high of 40.15 percent for grade one. Most of the grades clustered around the 35 percent figure as indicated in the Appendix on page 4.

Ninety-seven school districts (41.63 percent) indicated that they had provided some inservice training in economics for their elementary teachers. The school districts answering the questionnaire report that the personnel teaching economics units in the social science framework had little college training in economics. Almost half of such teachers had no college training in economics (47.16 percent) and 56.49 percent have had less than three semester units of college economics. The Advisory Seminar to the State Department of Education recommended a minimum of three units of economics for elementary teachers (see Appendix page 5).¹

HIGH SCHOOL ECONOMICS

At the high school level 1,737 students were enrolled in a separate one year course in economics. Less than one-third of the high schools (31.66%) reported they offered a one semester course in economics for students of grade twelve (see Appendix page 6). The enrollments in this course were 18,563 students for a total of 20,300 students taking a separate course in economics in grade twelve. However, less than ten percent (9.26%) of the grade twelve students in the reporting schools take this course (see Appendix page 7). It is very likely that the high schools that did not report have even a smaller percentage taking this course. Consequently well over 91 percent of the high school seniors in this State do not take the senior

1. College Preparation for Teaching Economics. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, November 1966, p. 19.

course in economics. Nevertheless, there has been some expansion in economic education in the last six years. In 1961, the survey conducted by this Department showed only 10,833 or 1.76 percent of the senior and four-year high school students enrolled in economics courses. By 1966, the percentage of such enrollments increased to 3.11 percent and a total of 30,116 students (see Appendix page 8). Separate economics courses below grade twelve level were offered in 1966 by about one-sixth (16.13 percent) of the schools to 9,816 students.

In most of the schools the separate economics course, irrespective of grade level, is a general course (99). Less than one-half as many schools offer a consumer economics course (45), and 69 report the course as equally divided between general and consumer economics. Less than eight percent of the reporting schools offer both a consumer economics course and a general economics course. Thirty-two of the reporting units offer a one-quarter semester course, but it is offered to 32,567 students which is a greater number than are receiving the one or two semester instruction in economics.

The separate economics courses are predominantly taught by social science teachers (78.25 percent) and business education department teachers (20.05 percent), see Appendix page 9 . Economic units are offered in social science and business education courses. History courses offer such instruction to more students than any other course of study as indicated in the Appendix page 10.

TEACHER TRAINING

Many of the teachers that are teaching the separate economics course have little or no training in economics. Seven hundred and sixty-three teachers of such courses reported no college training in economics and an additional 721 teachers have had less than six semester units. Only 10.91 percent of the teachers meet the minimum number of units under the Fisher Bill requirements of a minor and even a smaller percentage would meet the twenty-one semester units minimum recommendation of the Advisory Seminar's report on "College Preparation for Teaching Economics" (see Appendix page 11.)

The teachers of other courses containing economic units have also had little college education in economics. Over 28 percent of these teachers reported no college training in economics. Only about 30 percent of the teachers would qualify under the minimum nine semester units recommendation of the Advisory Seminar (see Appendix page 12.)

TEACHER DEMANDS

The schools indicated that they would have offered 141 more classes in economics if qualified personnel were available. They also estimate that they will offer 776 more classes in economics by the academic year 1971-72, assuming no changes in the Education Code relative to requiring economic courses.

CONCLUSIONS

California schools need a great expansion in separate economics courses and economic analysis integrated in other social science and business education courses. All students should have the opportunity to gain economic understanding starting in kindergarten and building toward a capstone course in grades eleven or twelve. To accomplish this, it will be necessary to offer many institutes in economics for present teachers and improve the training of future teachers. Teachers should have the following training in economics as recommended by the Advisory Seminar:

A. For all teachers K-12:

The basic course, three semester hours, stressing:

1. Economic reasoning
2. Basic concepts and models
3. Applications to problem and policy situations

Plus a "classroom laboratory" course in teaching economics.²

B. For all social studies teachers, grades 7-11:

A three-course sequence in economics -- 9 semester hours

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1. The basic course | 3 semester hours |
| 2. Contrasting Economic Systems | 3 semester hours |
| 3. An elective, preferably an
advanced problems course | 3 semester hours |

C. For teachers of grade 12 semester-courses in economics:

A minor in economics -----21 semester hours

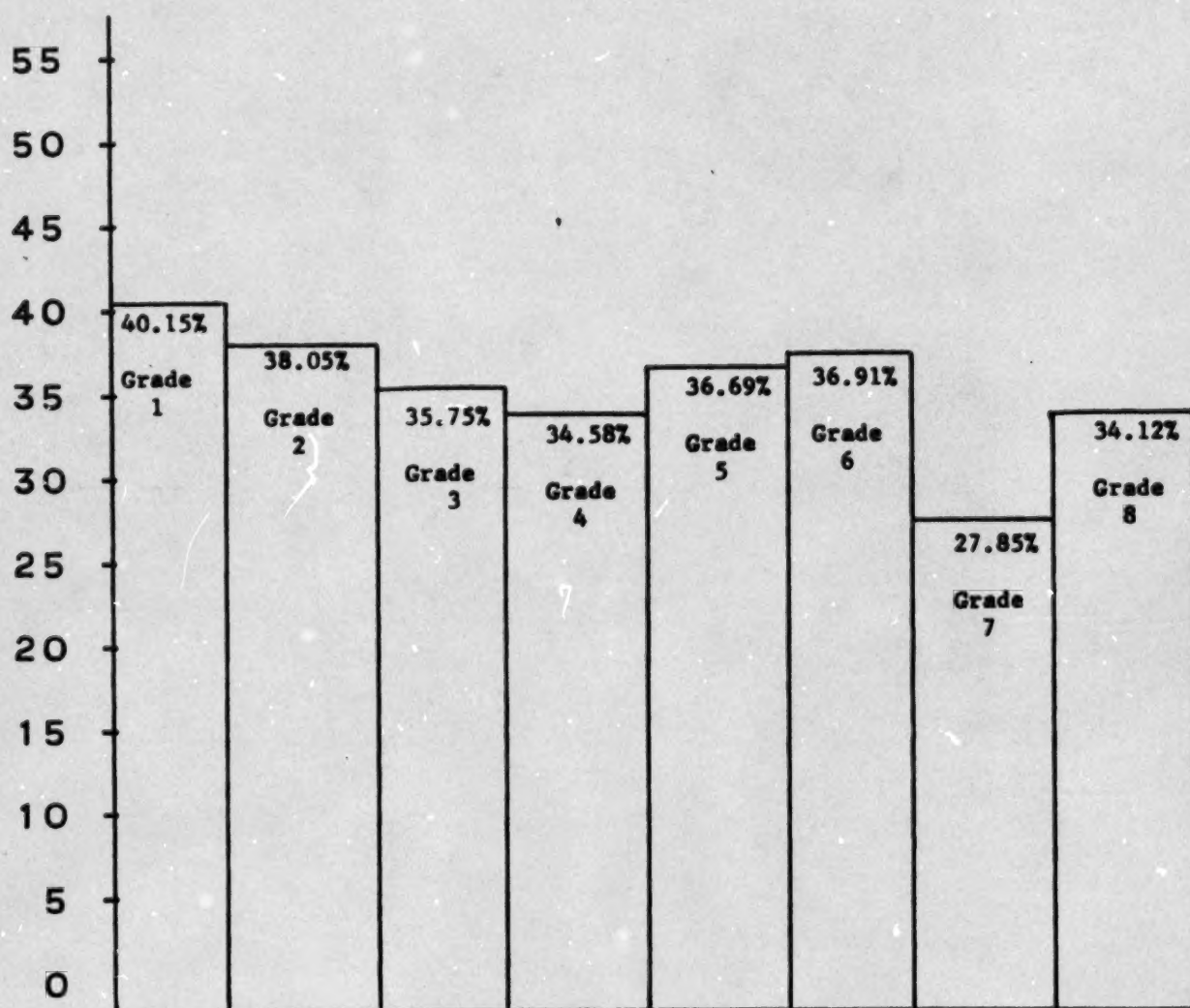
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|--|------------------|
| 1. The basic course | 3 semester hours |
| 2. Contrasting Economic Systems | 3 semester hours |
| 3. Macro-economics and Policy | 3 semester hours |
| 4. Micro-economics and Policy | 3 semester hours |
| 5. Quantitative methods | 3 semester hours |
| 6. Two electives in economic
problems | 6 semester hours |

2. If teacher trainees are required to take the one-hour "laboratory" course, they should be given one unit additional credit for successful completion of the basic course. The totals then become 4, 10, and 22 hours respectively.

APPENDIX

PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS OFFERING
UNITS OF ECONOMICS
BY GRADE ¹

PERCENTAGE

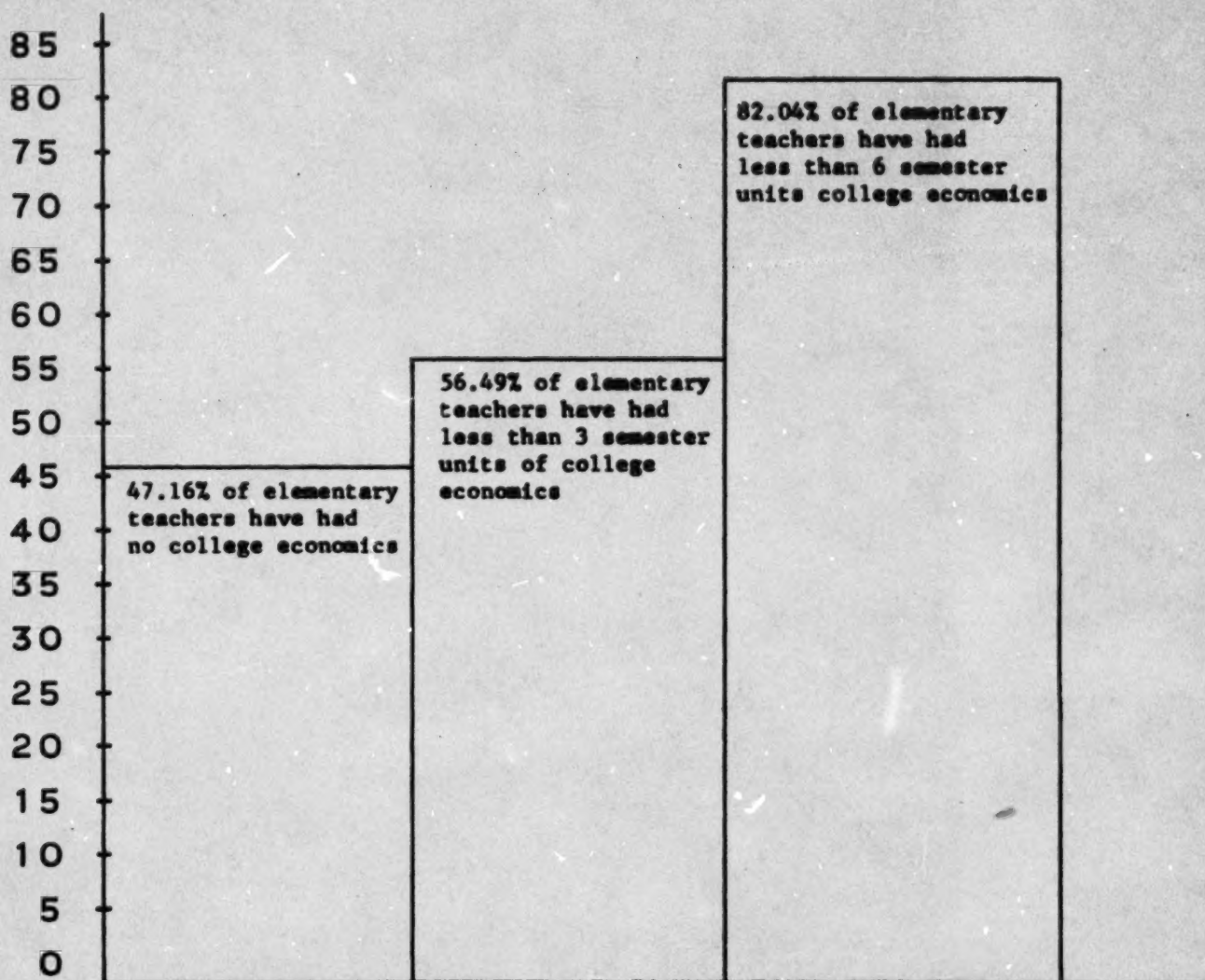


¹ Based Upon Replies To Questionnaire

ECONOMICS TRAINING OF CALIFORNIA ELEMENTARY PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

SEMESTER UNITS IN COLLEGE ECONOMICS COURSES

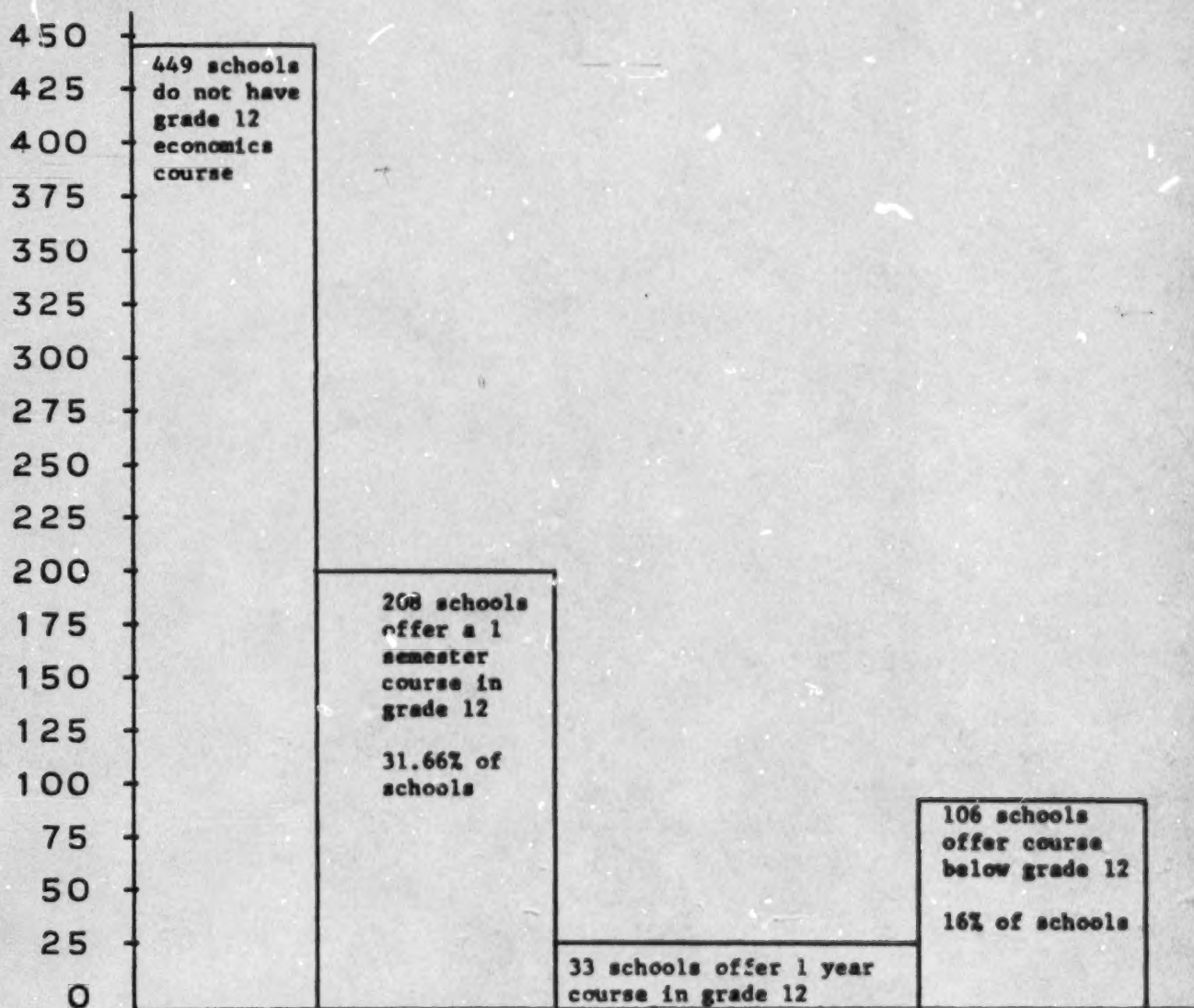
PERCENTAGE



Advisory Seminar Recommended 3 Semester Units
as Minimum Training for Elementary Teachers

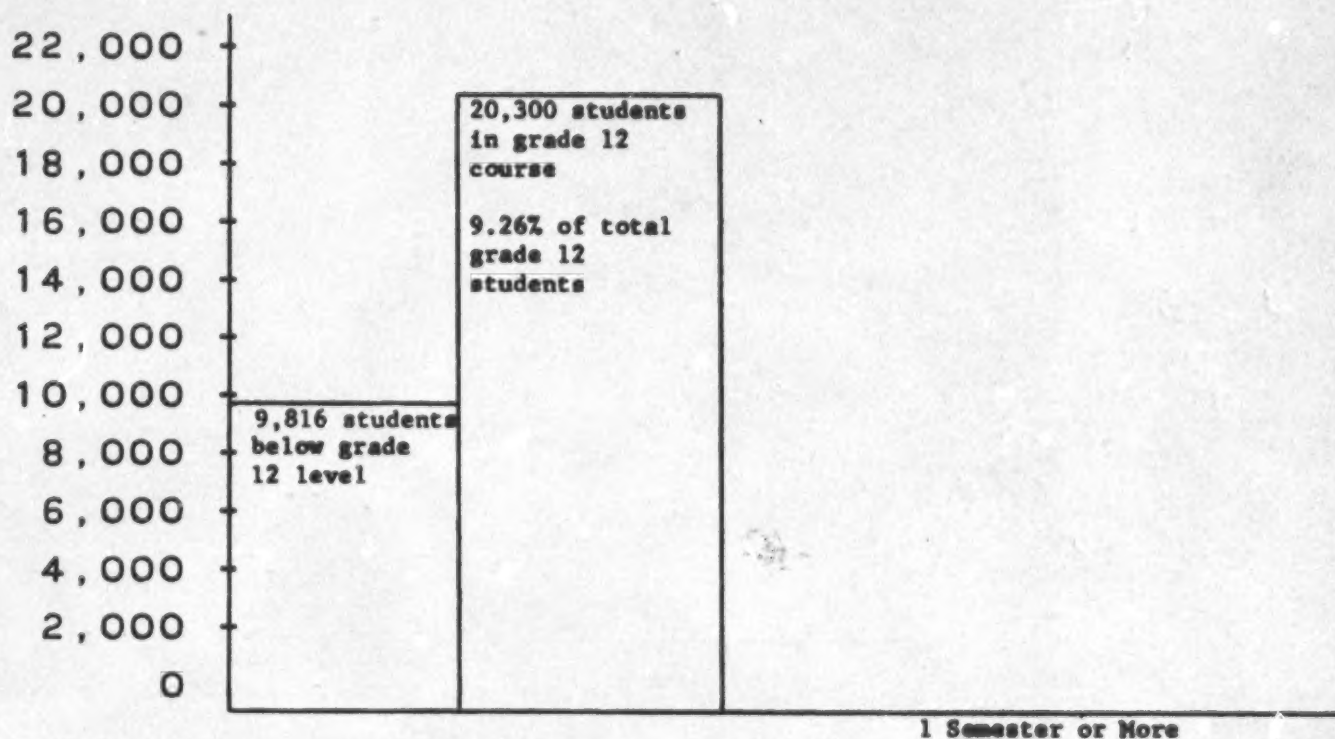
CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS OFFERING SEPARATE COURSES IN ECONOMICS

NUMBER OF
SCHOOLS

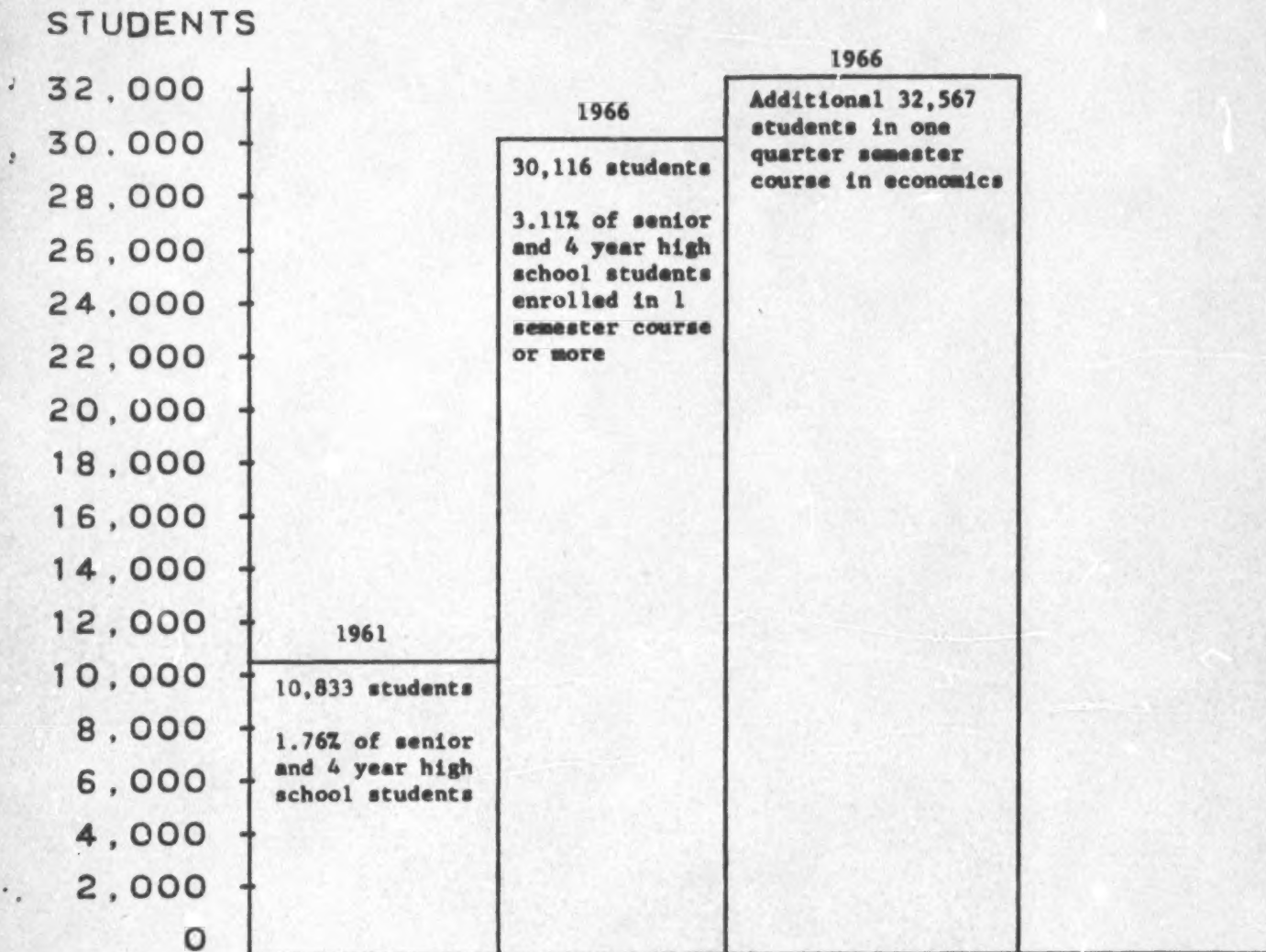


ENROLLMENT IN ECONOMICS COURSES, 1966

NUMBER OF
STUDENTS

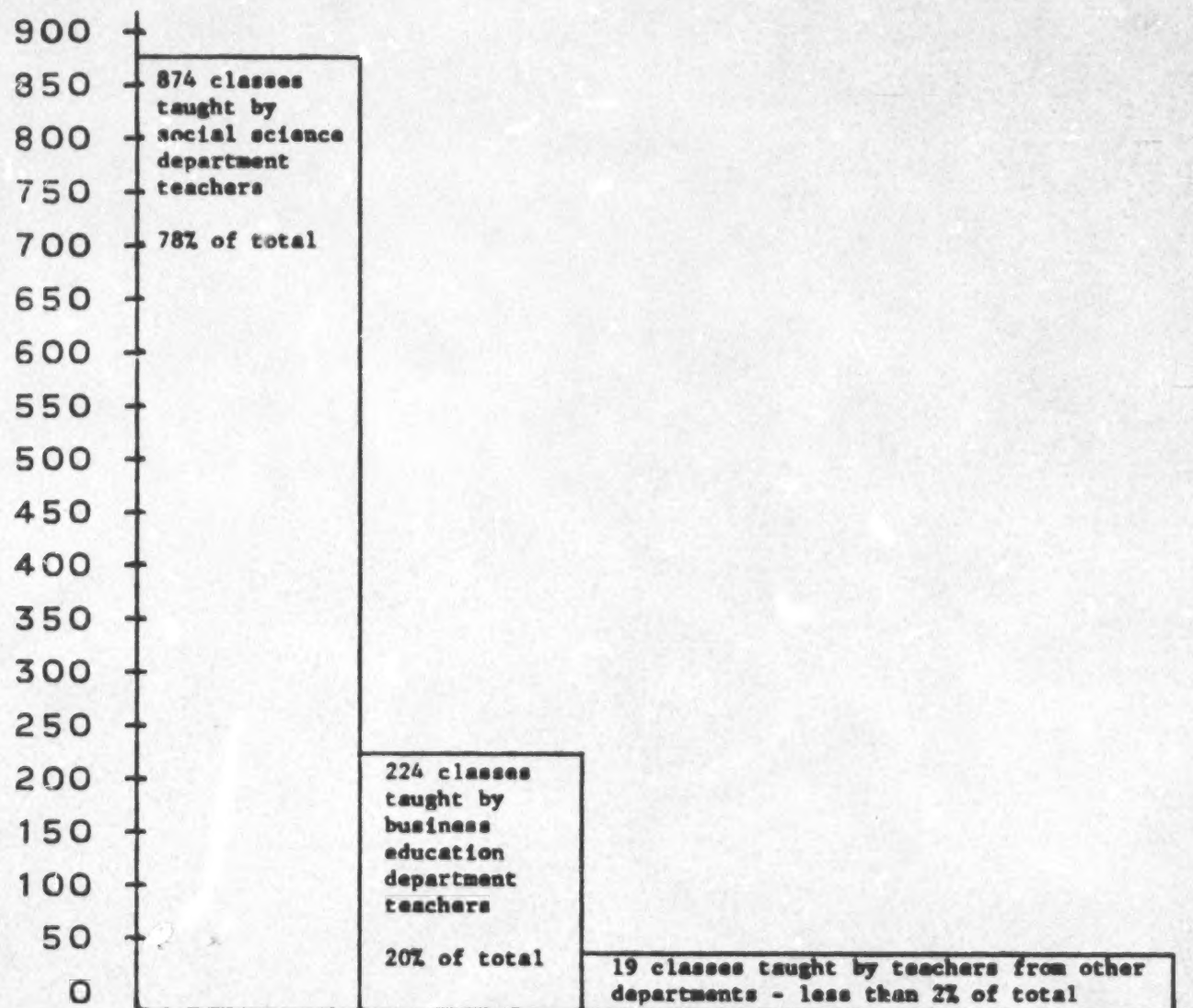


INCREASED ENROLLMENTS IN SEPARATE COURSE HIGH SCHOOL ECONOMICS 1961 - 1966



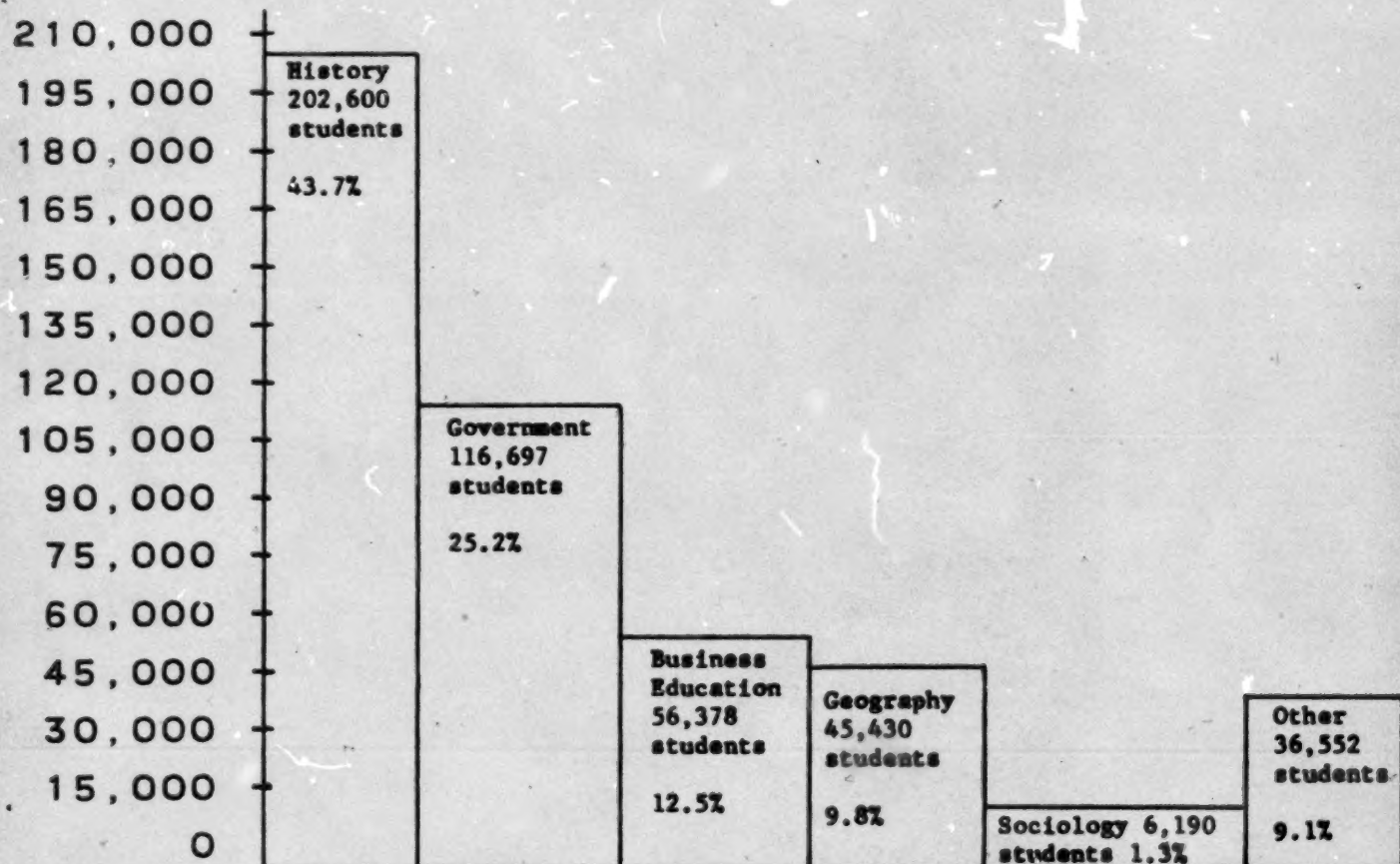
SOURCES OF ECONOMICS TEACHERS BY DEPARTMENTS

NUMBER OF
CLASSES



SECONDARY STUDENTS RECEIVING UNITS OF ECONOMIC EDUCATION IN OTHER COURSES

STUDENTS



CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS OF SEPARATE ECONOMICS COURSE, 1966

PERCENTAGE

